

Essays and Contributions.

HOW SHALL THE BRETHREN CHURCH ATTAIN A HIGHER STANDARD OF SPIRITUALITY.

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To attain a higher standard of spirituality is one of the crowning needs of the Brethren Church. It is a need of needs in all the churches; the better we become acquainted with the churches of our brotherhood the more we feel this need. With the broadest and best foundation in the world on which to build, yet we have not attained to that standard of spirituality to which it is our privilege to attain. We are living away beneath our privileges. We are living on the floor when we might be living in the ceiling. We live in the basement, when we might be living in the upper rooms. We have yet too much of the old carnal mind about us, and not enough of that mind which was in Christ Jesus. We turn our eyes downward and earthward instead of upward and heavenward. We strive after the things of this world, its wealth, its treasures, its pleasures, instead of giving ourselves wholly to God. There is too much earthly desire in our hearts, and not enough earnest desire after holiness and heaven.

What we want is a more thorough consecration of ourselves to God, each one of us, every brother and sister in the church. The secret of a true life, the secret of a happy life, the secret of a useful life is a thorough consecration of the whole life to God, a giving of ourselves to God. Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, rejoiced, that out of their deep poverty, they had given, so abundantly to the poor saints, but he rejoiced with more fulness of joy that "first they gave *their own selves* to the Lord." Now if it is worth while to be a christian at all, it is worth while to be a whole christian. If it is worth while to love God at all, it is worth while to give him the whole heart. If Christ is worth any thing in life, he is worth everything. If it is worth while to receive Christ into the heart at all, it is worth while to give him full possession of the heart and life.

"Take my life, and let it be,
Consecrated, Lord, to thee."

A more thorough consecration means a higher standard of spirituality.—But how shall we attain unto this? In order that the church attain unto a higher standard of spirituality, its individual members must rise higher in the divine life, must become more spiritually minded, more Christ-like and this work, it seems to me, begins with the pulpit, with the ministry. In Hosea, we read "There shall be like people, like priest," I think today, we might truthfully reverse it and say "Like pastor, like people." The church with worldly minded pastor is bound to grow more worldly minded, as time goes on. The church with spiritually minded pastor, must grow more spiritually minded, if the pastor remains long enough for his influence to be felt. The pastor is the leader, the shepherd. His is the predominating influence in the church, and his walk, his conduct, his teaching, his influence, his life will lead the people into a higher spiritual life, or into greater worldly-mindedness. Not that the pastor can change the hearts of his people, but if he be spiritually minded, by his example and teaching, he exerts an influence upon them that leads them to strive after and labor for a higher life.

The great practical question then, is how shall this higher spiritual life be attained by both pastor and people. How shall we make the christian life a steady march onward and upward? We have often heard it said "there is no royal road to learning." And so there is no royal road to a higher life. There is no royal road to excellence of any kind. The man who would be a good workman, must labor continually to improve himself. The man who would be a great scholar must labor day after day, night after night.

"The heights by great men reached and kept,

Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the light."

And so the man who would develop his soul, his spiritual faculties, would become more Christ-like and rise higher in the divine life, must do it by constant effort. If we would grow we must want to grow; we must try to grow. Growth demands earnest effort, earnest purpose. Paul made great pro-

gress, but Paul was earnest and full of zeal. He threw all the energies of a great earnest nature into his work, and he turned every adverse circumstance of his life into a step by which he might mount upward. When in the Philippian jail, he sang praises to God at the midnight hour. We would have been moaning and sighing over our hard lot, but Paul sang a song of praise, rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. Don't you think he rose nearer to God that night than ever before? The stripes, the imprisonments, the shipwreck he suffered were but rounds of the ladder by which he climbed to God. And so if we will, we can turn every adverse circumstance, every annoyance, every disappointment of our lives into a stepping stone by which to rise to a higher life. But this can come only by earnest purpose and effort, earnest continued effort, day after day, week after week, year after year.

"Ne'er think the victory won,

Nor lay thine armor down,

Thine arduous work will not be done,
Till thou obtain thy crown."

The great secret of a true christian life, of a well developed spiritual life is a *close walk with God*. If we want to be pure and good, noble and gentle, true and brave, we must walk with God; we must talk with him, as heart to heart and soul to soul, commune with him, look upon him. Supreme beauty of character and life can only come from beholding God, talking with him, communing with him. Moses talked with God on Mount Sinai, and gazing on his glory there, he caught a gleam of the light, and came down from the Mount with his own face radiant. We cannot look upon God's glory as Moses did upon the Mount, but we can look at it through his word. We can look at him in all his beauty, all his purity, all his goodness, his holiness, his faithfulness, his love, until our souls are stirred to adoration and we worship him. Worshipping him, we grow like him. It is a law of worship that we grow like the being we worship.

Looking at Jesus Christ as he is revealed to us in his Word, we catch from him the inspiration to a higher, nobler life. Who can meditate upon Christ's wonderful love to the world, that love